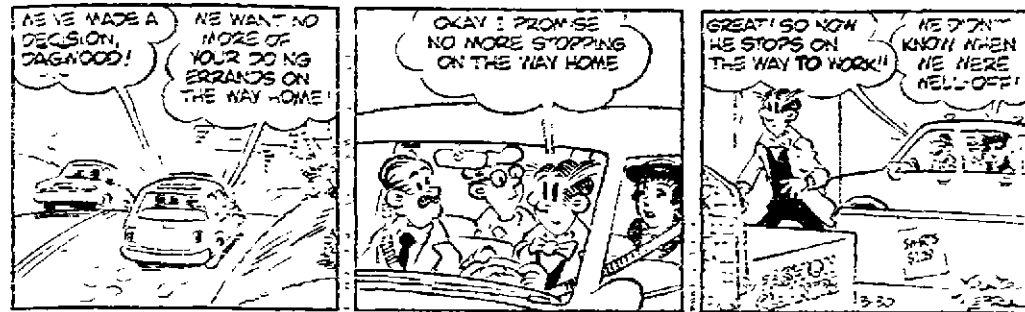


BLONDIE



SALLY FORTH



THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN



9 CHICKWEED LANE



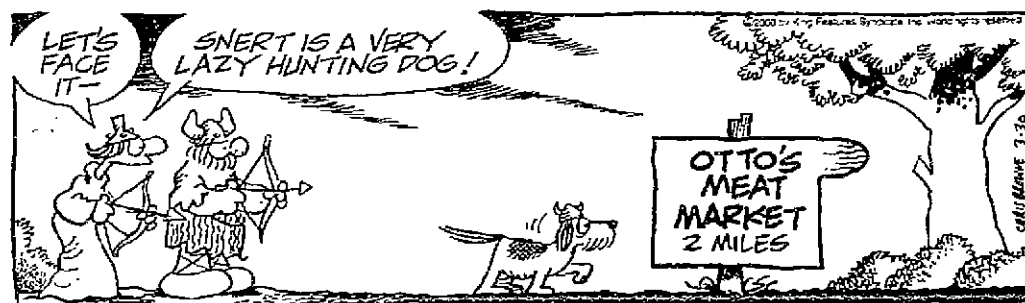
ANDY CAPP



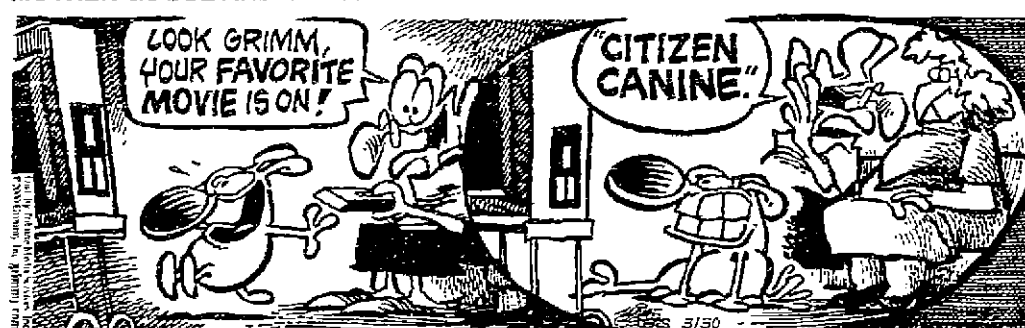
ROSE IS ROSE



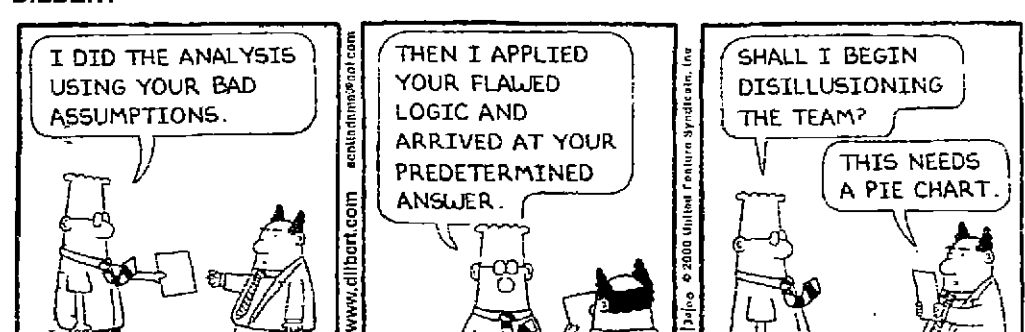
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



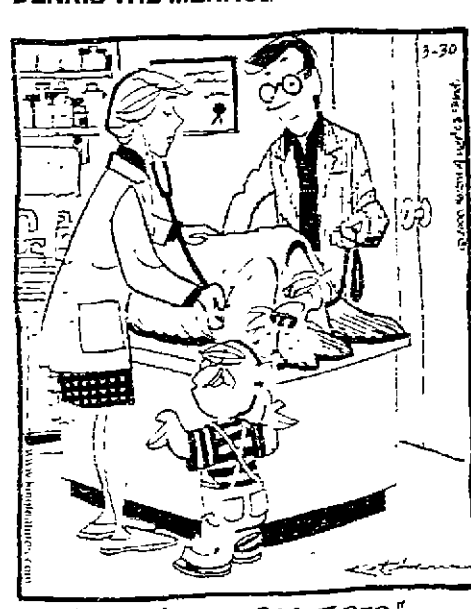
MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM



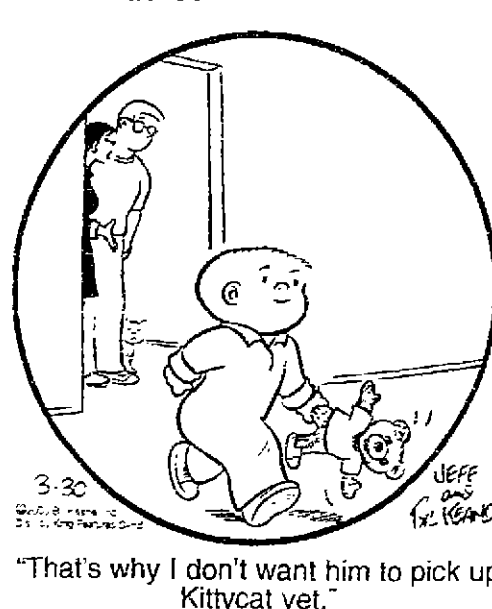
DILBERT



DENNIS THE MENACE



FAMILY CIRCUS



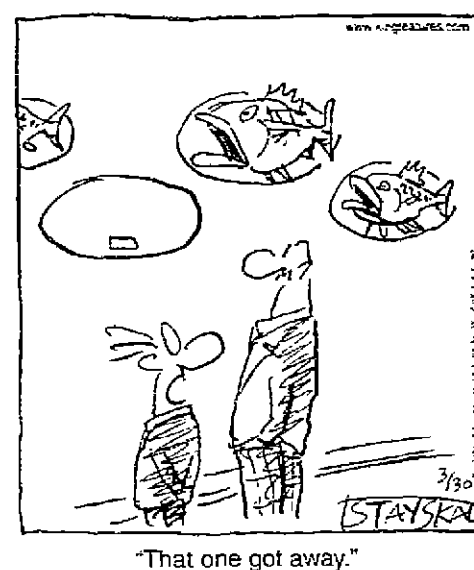
RHYMES WITH ORANGE



HOROSCOPE

For Friday, March 31
ARIES (March 21 to April 19) All of your efforts are sure to be recognized soon.
TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Be aware that in your efforts on cutting horns with people in positions of authority today you might come out the loser.
GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Let your head rule over your heart as much as possible today.
CANCER (June 21 to July 22) You don't necessarily know best today.
LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) It's time to put your pride aside when dealing with a relationship issue today.
VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) As the moon moves into the house of Aquarius, it's a good time to take inventory of your home and office.
LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) As the moon moves through Aquarius, you are lucky to have friends by your side.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) Making an intellectual connection could be more important than a romantic one today.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) Your communication skills are in tip-top shape today.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Be very wary when it comes to your money today.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) You get a boost of positive energy as the moon moves into your house today.
PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) Helping people is the top priority on your to-do list today.

RALPH



WORD SLEUTH

RUGBY FOOTBALL

V H D A X U R P M J G D S D A
 Y V S O N K I E F D A X T N L
 V T Q O M J D H S F P C U A G
 A Y W U R I P D N L L J O L N
 H F D B S C R U M M A G E G I
 Z X V F T A R Q O M C K M N L
 I H F Y W F S D B Z E Y I E B
 W O V R T K R Q L O K N T K B
 L K O T C R P U N T I I O C I
 H F F A D A A T O U C H N U R
 C A B Z X M W K C I K P O R D

Wednesday's unlisted clue: INDIA
 Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions—forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.
 Thursday's unlisted clue hint: WHERE FIRST PLAYED

A try Backs Forward Goats No timeouts Offside Ruck
 Dropkick Mark Maul Placekick Scrummage Touch

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 For solution, see Classified.

ACES

By Bobby Woit

With only two spaces South saw no advantage to making up, so he won his ace. Then he faced his big problem: Should he take the heart finesse or knock out the diamond ace? Refusing to relinquish the lead without a fight, South took the heart finesse. Had it won, he would have scored three hearts, five clubs and a spade for nine winners. When it lost, the defenders took a heart, three spades and the diamond ace for one down. How does South discover how spades split? He must refuse the first spade. When East returns the spade deuce, South knows that spades are 4-4. Why? If East had only the queen and deuce, West would have six spades. If so, he would have led a fourth-best eight instead of the trey. Therefore, East's spade deuce confirms that spades are 4-4. With only three spades, East would have returned his middle spade (and West would have led a different spade). With the spade distribution revealed, South has a solid route to game. Instead of risking a useless heart finesse, he knocks out the diamond ace, and he limits the defenders to only four tricks.

NORTH
 ♠ 10 7 6
 ♥ A J 10
 ♦ K T
 ♣ Q J 10 9 8

EAST
 ♠ Q 8 7 2
 ♥ K 7 5
 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ 7 4 3

SOUTH
 ♠ A 3
 ♥ Q 8 6
 ♦ Q J 10 9 6
 ♣ A K 3

Vulnerable: Both
 Dealer: South
 The bidding:
 South West North East
 1 NT Pass 3 NT All pass

Opening lead: Spade trey

BRIDGE RESULTS

Bridge Studio: Sunday afternoon, first, Jane Donn, Bruce Rubin; second, Cameron Ross, Bill Bremer. Sunday evening, first, Joe Fortino, Bruce Rubin; second, third, George Valette, Jason Chappell; Cliff Donn, Bill Barrington; Monday morning, first, Joe Fortino, Larry Sunser; second, third, Louis Bashaw, Pauline Filsinger; Claude Henri, Julie Sunser; Monday evening, first, Jim Ineich, Jim Ineich Jr.; second, third, fourth, Judie Bailey, Bill Barrington; Bob Garwood, Bruce Rubin; Sharlene Kostichka, Doug Lyon. Tuesday evening, first, Jim Ineich, Jim Ineich Jr.; second, third, Bruce Rubin, Cameron Ross; Carl Banick, Charlotte Morseburg; Wednesday evening, first, Cliff Donn, Jane Donn; second, Nancy Noble, Mike Rich; Thursday afternoon Teaching Game, 1 NS, Millie Albrigo, Helen Simmons; 2 NS, John Beauchamp, Janet Sinclair; 1 EW, Mary Grosso, Gerri Herold; 2 EW, Ruth Matson, Jane Patterson; Friday morning, first, Millie Albrigo, Larry Sunser; second, Sarah Fiorito, Julie Sunser; Friday evening, first, Jason Chappell, John Chappell; second, Bill Bremer, Bruce Rubin.

Bridge Studio E-Z Bridge Division: Tuesday evening Novice Game, first, Marilyn Engle, Leslie Smith; second, third, Jim Bonnie, Peggy Bonnie; Clara Bagiackas, Paula Boghosian; Thursday afternoon Novice Game, first, Barbara Bickford, Barbara Holmes; second, Carol McAndrew, Petey Pilcher; Saturday evening Intermediate Game, first, Ron Enos, Wayne Wilson; second, third, Betty Miller, Bill Hartleib; Jean Gorman, Bill Pennington.

Concord Aces: Monday morning, 1 NS, Sharlene Kostichka, Anna Timell; 2 NS, Alberta McCormick, Katherine Worthen; 1 EW, Mary Ryan, Dale Swift; 2 EW, Fran McCarthy, Clo Morris.

Liverpool Duplicate Bridge Club: Wednesday morning, first/second, Sharlene Kostichka, Bib Letnam; Mary Gorkin, Helene Gove.

Stonewall Duplicate Bridge Club: Tuesday morning, first, Fran Dussault, Clo Morris; second, Marge Nelson, Golde Walczyk.

Syracuse Contract Duplicate Bridge Club: Tuesday morning, 99er Game, first, Bill Arman, Jeff Riddle; second, Louis Bashaw, Bob Bliz; Tuesday evening, 99er Game, first, Bill Arman, Jeffrey Weiner, second, Lee Greene, Rosemary Skelly; Wednesday evening, first, Bill Burnett, Fred Pesele; second, Judy Butcher, Lorraine Desrusseaux; Thursday noon, first, Judy Butcher, Lorraine Desrusseaux; second, Alberta McCormick, Craig Smith; Thursday evening, first, Paul Peters, Norm Radway, second, Don Paulus, Bob Simard; Friday evening, first, Lorraine Desrusseaux, Paul Peters; second, Sharon Paulus, Bob Simard; Sunday afternoon, first, Eugenia Gallagher; Alberta McCormick; second, Paul Peters, Wilona Phillips.

Western Hills: 1 NS, Anne Carmola, Lil Parkhurst; 2 NS, Kay Howe, Dorothy Thurlow; 1 EW, Helen Kelly, Ruth Richner; 2 EW, Gerri Burns, Betty Pfeiffer.

N.Y. TIMES CROSSWORD

No. 0217

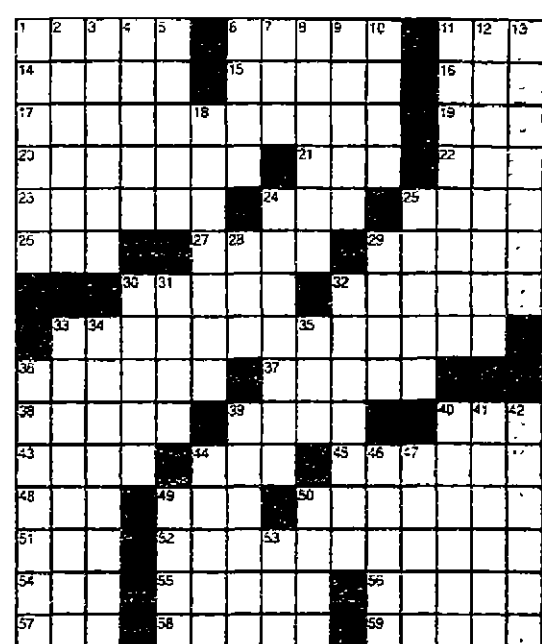
ACROSS
 1 Stand-up's payoff
 6 Libreville's land
 11 Jam ingredient?
 14 Play ____ in (influence)
 15 Last in a series
 16 Metallurgist's subject
 17 Winter sounds
 19 Computer amount, slangily
 20 Court sport
 21 "Play it again!"
 22 It may be caught
 23 "Delaware Water Gap" painter
 24 Big betts
 25 High time?
 26 Line part: Abbr.
 27 Playwright Bogosian
 29 Sink
 30 Home health hazard
 32 Candy known as "The Freshmaker"
 33 Mowgli's medium
 36 Boot tip
 37 Ancient Greek city-state
 38 Zeal
 39 Netanyahu, informally
 40 "Holy cow!"
 43 Element in Geiger counters
 44 Game winner's cry
 45 Joseph Conrad's "The Secret ____"
 48 Consanguine folks
 49 Kind of law or order
 50 ill-considered
 51 "Wheel of Fortune" buy
 52 Nitty Gritty Dirt Band hit, 1971
 54 Football positions: Abbr.
 55 Washington's Stage
 56 Former heavyweight champ Jimmy
 57 Address component, these days
 58 Part of a 1997 telecommunications merger
 59 Like a pomegranate

DOWN

1 Some pilgrims
 2 French satellite launcher
 3 Perfecting
 4 With fungi, they form lichens
 5 Hawks
 6 Much of Mongolia
 7 Letters in many black church names
 8 Noted French-born English writer
 9 Good looks?
 10 Harper's Weekly artist
 11 Make a pass at
 12 Post-accident question

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

SWALE OSHA ATL
 SOMERS AWES RIA
 WOMENLIKESILENT
 DORSET ESSENCE
 MTN DEBT FAUN
 PRIMP MAPS TSPS
 SITOUT BEAST
 MENTHEYASSUME
 ATOMS STRONG
 PARR REAL SNITS
 ALEC RTES ERA
 TOSHIBA SONATA
 THEYRELISTENING
 TAN OLDS SENECA
 EST NAST DOSES



Puzzle by Matt Garmey and David Bianco

13 College board
 18 Relaxed
 24 Cartel leader
 25 They aren't done
 28 Ex-Yankee Guidry
 29 Actress Mazar
 30 Satellite's job
 31 Cracked open
 32 Grammy winner Manchester
 33 Assaulted
 34 Pleasure seeker
 35 Alternative to a passing shot

36 Stain relative
 39 1955 installation
 40 Gate design
 41 Tale of a journey
 42 Fancy
 44 TV producer Marshall
 46 "Tap" star
 47 Devious plan
 49 Fed
 50 Trojan War hero
 53 It's better than nothing

Answers to any three clues in this puzzle are available by touch-tone phone 1-900-420-5656 (95¢ per minute). Annual subscriptions are available for the best of Sunday crosswords from the last 50 years 1-888-7-ACROSS